

THE BULLET BACK GROUND PAPER

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER ON THE BULLET STATEMENT

PURPOSE

The Bullet Background Paper is an excellent tool designed to help you prepare written statements of a single idea or a single accomplishment and its impact.

DISCUSSION

- Attributes: Concise, accurate, brief and specific (CABS)
- Type: Bullet statements
 - Single Idea
 - Definition: Concise written statement of a single idea
 - Attributes: Must be CABS and one main idea of thought
 - Cannot delineate
 - Must serve purpose
 - Accomplishment-Impact
 - Be CABS
 - Have an accomplishment
 - Have an impact
 - It can be implied or stated
 - State it to the unit mission, organization, etc
 - Make it clear to those not familiar with specific
 - Make the bullet strong
 - Use it to put accomplishments into perspective
 - Type of Accomplishment-Impact Bullets
 - Action Verb: Achieved a 100 percent in-commission rate ...
 - Modified Verb: Consistently exceeds all standards of ...

SUMMARY

This paper summarizes the steps to accomplish the single idea and single accomplishment bullet statements.

MSgt Richards/CPD/PME/6-1603/gws/12 Mar 97

Sample

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
THE BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

An increasingly popular version of the background paper is the “bullet” background paper. The bullet format provides a concise, chronological evolution of a problem, a complete summary of an attached staff package or a more detailed explanation of what appears in an attached talking paper. Use the first paragraph to identify the main thrust of the paper.

Main ideas follow the intro paragraph and may be as long as several sentences or as short as one word (such as “Advantages”).

- Secondary items follow with a single dash and tertiary items follow with multiple indented dashes. Secondary and tertiary items can be as short as a word or as long as several sentences.
- Format varies.
 - Center title (all capital letters); use 1-inch margins all around; single space the text; double space between items—except double space title and triple space to text; use appropriate punctuation in paragraphs and complete thoughts.
 - Headings such as SUBJECT, PROBLEM, BACKGROUND, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION or RECOMMENDATION are optional.

Keys to developing a good backgrounder:

- Write the paper according to the knowledge level of the user; i.e., a person who is very knowledgeable on the subject won’t require as much detail as one who knows very little.
- Emphasize main points.
- Attach additional support data; refer to it in the backgrounder.
- Require minimum length to achieve brevity with short transitions.
- End with concluding remarks or recommendations.

Include an identification line (author’s rank and name, organization, office symbol, phone number, typist’s initials and date) on the first page 1 inch from the bottom of the page or at least two lines below the last line of text.

REMEMBER: When subdividing paragraphs, never use a “-” without a “-” or a “--” without a “--,” etc.
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Mrs. Wilson/ACSC/CC/3-2295/cab/7 Apr 97

BULLET STATEMENTS

Faster than a second lieutenant, wiser than a grizzled old chief master sergeant, more direct than wall-to-wall counseling, it's a clause, it's a phrase, no **it's a bullet statement!** *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition, defines **bullet** as "resembling a bullet (as in curved form); a large dot placed in printed matter to call attention to a particular passage." **Statement** is defined as "something stated: a single declaration or remark, assertion; a report of facts or opinions."

The dictionary does not offer a nice, convenient definition for "bullet statement." So here goes the old college try: *Bullet statement: A clear, concise "bottom line" of an idea or a single accomplishment and its impact.* Alas, a definition alone (irrespective of how well developed) is inadequate for the task of *creating* a bullet statement. To create an effective bullet statement, you must know its critical attributes.

Let's start exploring these issues by looking at the value of an effective bullet statement. A bullet statement, by its very nature is **concise, accurate, brief and specific**. (CABS).

- ◎ Concise relates to your "bottom line." Think like you're writing a telegram and every word costs.
- ◎ Accurate means stating the facts honestly ... especially when writing performance reports, nominations, etc!
- ◎ Brief speaks for itself.
- ◎ Specific leaves no room for doubt ... it's definite, to the point and clear. If not, it may be clear as mud to someone else and you won't be nearby to answer any questions!

The effort to create ALL effective bullet statements begins with realizing that bullet statements need to be **concise, accurate, brief and specific** (CABS). To develop your bullet statements—first, use phrases or clauses—you rarely need to use sentences. Second, there is no need to begin with a personal pronoun or a specific name ... the subject is implied. Third, leave out all the "fluff" like helping verbs, adjectives or transitions. It's not needed to improve the flow and smoothness of the paper. Finally and most importantly, stick to your bottom line (see pages 10, 28 and 57). One more time since this is important ... be, concise, accurate, brief and specific!

There are numerous uses for bullet statements in official Air Force writing, including the talking paper, the bullet background paper, and personal notes and memos. However, the performance report and the awards package arguably have the most decisive impact on an Air Force career. As Air Force members, you appreciate the value of a well-written performance report, and award and decoration nominations. As our definition implies, there are two different types of bullet statements—single idea and accomplishment-impact. Each has its own unique attributes since each serves its own unique purpose.

If you're one of those analytical-thinkers, here's a quick mathematical memory technique to use!

single idea bullets = CABS + 1 (single idea or thought)

accomplishment-impact bullets = CABS + 2 (accomplishment and impact)

But, if you're like the average Joe, continue reading for more highlights!

1 SINGLE IDEA BULLET~Talking paper, point paper, bullet background paper. Check out the samples below to see the various changes in format! Select the style that best fits your needs and then be consistent. There are so many variations and uses of the single idea bullet that delineating different types would be an exercise in futility. Instead, it is more important to understand that a single idea bullet should serve your purpose. For example, if it jogs your memory in a talking paper, it serves its purpose irrespective of what it looks like—just be consistent. If it provides the necessary information in a point paper or a bullet background paper and conveys the appropriate message, it serves its purpose.

- Forecast is 600+ schools and 80,000 cadets
- Air Force Junior ROTC is growing
 - Over 65,000 cadets
 - More than 1,100 officer and noncommissioned officer instructors
- Two questions continually present themselves to commanders:
 - What is actually happening?
 - What (if anything) can I or should I do about it?
- Developing an air campaign is a five-stage process.
 - Researching the combat environment
 - Determining the air objectives
 - Determining the air strategy
 - Analyzing centers of gravity
 - Putting the campaign together
- The prospect for growing drug abuse worldwide can be correlated with the prevalence of the following ingredients:
 - An awareness of drugs.
 - Access to them.
 - The motivation to use them.
- There is a tendency to speak of the commander, but there are, in fact, many (interrelated) commanders, and each commander uses a separate command and control process to:
 - make information decisions (about the situation),
 - make operational decision (about actions to be taken) and
 - cause them to be executed (within a structure established by prior organizational decisions).
- The Coast Guard is a multimission agency with these broad, general mission areas in the maritime arena:
 - Safety.
 - Law enforcement.
 - Environmental protection.
 - Political-military.

2 ACCOMPLISHMENT-IMPACT BULLET~Performance reports or recommendations, awards, decorations. In most cases it begins with a strong action verb (see pages 203) and ends with stressing its mission impact. If you're painting a picture, describe how the accomplishment enhanced the mission. For some further help on how to develop accomplishment statements, see page 201. Some helpful accomplishment questions to keep you on track could be:

- What did the person or group do?
- What was the success (or, less often, the failure)?

The impact component describes the results of the action, may be either implied or stated and is vital to describing the relative importance of the action. You should answer the following questions again and again while developing the impact component:

- What is the impact on the mission of the organization or the AF?
- How can I make this impact statement stronger?
- Does it put things into perspective?
- Is it clear to an audience unfamiliar to this specific job or career field?

The bullet format allows you a couple of variations to get the job done. Once you have selected your style, ensure the statements are parallel in grammatical structure—be consistent.

action verb

- Developed new customer sign-in log reducing customer complaints by 35 percent
- Implemented a schedule to pick up customer equipment items reducing delays in pick-ups by 5 days
- Achieved a 100 percent in-commission rate
- Flew 200 incident-free sorties
- Launched 2,000 aircraft incident free
- Conducted 60 courses with 100 percent graduation
- Conducted 10 staff assistance visits this year.
 - Gave all units visited an excellent on the subsequent QAFA.
 - Selected two units for Air Force-wide recognition.
- Implemented a schedule to pick up customer equipment items.

modified verb

- Consistently exceeded all standards of ... [consistently modifies the verb *exceeded*]
- Solely responsible for production increases in ... [solely modifies the verb *responsible*]
- No discrepancies were noted in her area during the recent QAFA visit
- All subordinate training records were up to date and error free

The Latest, Greatest or Not So Greatest English

Audi = good-bye, I'm leaving, I'm out of here: "I'm audi."

Baldwin = attractive guy, a male Betty

Barney = unattractive guy, not a Baldwin

Betty = beautiful woman

Big time = totally, very

Buggin' = irritated, perturbed, flipping out: "I'm bugging"

Clueless = lost, stupid, mental state of people who are not
yet your friends, uncool

Furiously = very, extremely, majorly

Hang = get tight with, ally with

I'm all ... = I was saying such things as "He's all 'Where were you?'" and
"I'm all 'What's it your business?'"

Majorly = very, totally, furiously

Monet = looks fine from a distance but a mess up close,
not a babe, really

Monster = much too big and loud, very good

Postal = a state of irritation, psychotic anger and disorientation

TB = true blue, loyal, faithful

Toast = in trouble, doomed, exhausted, towed up, history

Tow up = tore up, in bad condition, trashed, toast

Wass up? = see "zup"

Wig, wiggled or wiggin' = become irritated, freak out, go postal

Zup? = Question: Is anything new? What's up

-from the film *Clueless*